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G U I D E

TO

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

For the Guide to Christian Perfection.

RELIGIOUS MAXIMS, HAVING A CONNECTION WITH HOLINESS

CXLVII.

Nothing can properly be called small, which really offends God; because the offence is to be estimated not only by the occasion, however small it may be, on which it takes place, but especially and chiefly by its relation to a Being of infinite wisdom, goodness and holiness.

CXLVIII.

He who hates crime, or any kind of wrong-doing, because wrong-doing is hateful in itself, does well; but he who, on analyzing his feelings, finds that he hates it through fear of its punishment rather than from aversion to its nature, cannot with any good reason be said to hate it at all.

CXLIX.

It is an easy thing for the holy soul, however high the state of its advancement, to separate itself from the condition of present acceptance and communion. Nothing more is wanted to bring about this deplorable result, than the least intentional neglect, the least known and deliberate infidelity.

CL.

Nature bleeds, when our reputation suffers from the evil opinions of our fellow-men; but the true and only infallible balm for this wound is the consciousness that we have done those things, for which our fellow-men blame and distrust us, with a single eye to the divine glory.

CLI.

If we wish for practical religious wisdom, we must find it where we are, that is to say, at the present time and in the present place; because it is the present time and place, which furnish us with the facts of God's providence, independently of which it is impossible for us to form a correct estimate of truth and duty.

CLII.

The soul is not happy, which is not at rest. But the soul can never have true rest, which places its confidence in any thing short of God. Mutability and uncertainty are characteristics of every thing which has not God in it.

CLIII.

When God has fully prepared the heart for religious action, we need not fear that he will fail to find for us our appropriate work. He knows the work, which is to be done, and the time of its being done, as well as the dispositions, which are fitted for doing it. Be watchful, therefore, but wait also. A good soldier, in the spirit of watchfulness, is always ready for action; but he never anticipates, by a restless and unwise hurry of spirits, the orders of his commander.

CLIV.

It is the part of a Christian, especially of a soul truly devoted and holy, to do good to others. But we should always remember, that we shall lose the grace which God has imparted, and shall bring barrenness and darkness into our own hearts, when we seek to do good to others, without a suitable sense of our personal dependence, and without a humble and watchful regard to the order of the divine providences.

CLV.

"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us." If we rightly understand these and other passages of similar import, no person can regard himself as accepted of God, who has not the spirit of forgiveness towards his neighbor.

CLVI.

Holiness is but another name for love. But that love, which constitutes the essence of holiness, is a love, which by its very nature conforms itself to the truth. It loves only that which ought to be loved; and it loves, not in defect or excess, not periodically and violently, but precisely according to the truth.

CLVII.

That love, which is not according to the truth, when the truth is capable of being known, in other words, that love, which is not precisely conformed to its object, will always be found to be vitiated by some human imperfection; by unwarrantable indolence, or by interested fear, or by selfish complaisance.

CLVIII.

The providence of God includes not only events but dispositions. In other words, there are moral providences as well as natural providences. God knows the tempers of men; the feelings, whether good or evil, which predominate in their hearts. And whether they shall exhibit those tempers at one time rather than another, on one occasion rather than another, is a matter, which is left hidden in the divine providences alone.

CLIX.

If our neighbor injures us by improper words or in any other way, it is as much an event in divine providence, considered in its relation to ourselves, as any event could be, by which we might be afflicted. God's hand is really in it, although it may require a higher faith to see it. Happy is the man who has the requisite faith, and who has those patient and acquiescent dispositions which such a faith is calculated to produce.

CLX.

Afflictions are from the same benevolent source from which mercies originate. They equally indicate God's goodness, and in their result will show that they are equally beneficial, and perhaps more so, to those who, in being the subjects of them, receive them in a proper temper of mind.

CLXI.

Seasons of retirement and of private communion with God, are of great value; but they ought never to be sought and indulged in, at the expense of those more social and public duties, to which the providence of God clearly calls us. Such a course, which could originate only in the reality of selfishness under the appearance of sincere devotion, would be a violation of God's will, and would be exceedingly injurious.

CLXII.

There are few situations more trying than those in which we find our labors for the spiritual good of others fruitless. It requires strong faith, especially in ministers of the Gospel, not to find the yoke of God's providence, which binds us to such a situation, a heavy one. Nevertheless it is possible, that the duty which we owe to our heavenly Father, requires us to stay there with the same submission and the same grateful confidence, which reconcile us to other trying circumstances.

CLXIII.

It is sometimes a serious and important question with the Christian, whether he is in his right position, standing precisely where he should stand, in the order of God's providence. In order to understand what we ought to do under such circumstances, we should be faithful, in the first place, to every obligation, which our present situation imposes; so that there shall be found within us no condemnations and rebukes of conscience for

neglect of duty. And discharging our duties in this manner, we should remain calmly and quietly where we are, till the providences of God shall so clearly open another situation, that conscience, enlightened by the Holy Ghost, (as the conscience of a truly consecrated man always is,) shall condemn us for not leaving the present one.

CLXIV.

Human friendships, resting on the changeable foundation of humanity, cannot be more stable, more enduring, than the frail foundation which supports them. They exist to-day; and too often are dissolved and scattered to-morrow. But he who on Christian principles possesses God's friendship, will never find him changing and different in future from what he is at present. He is a friend to-day, to-morrow, and for ever.

CLXV.

Indifference to religion is a great evil. Indifference to SELF, (that is to say, indifference to our own interests considered *as separate from those of God,*) is a great good. Such is the nature of the human mind that we cannot be indifferent to every thing. To say, therefore, that we are indifferent to ourselves, if we properly recognize and feel the relations we sustain, and if we say it in a Christian spirit, is essentially the same thing as to say, that we possess a heart truly given to God. Self is forgotten, in order that God may be remembered; SELF is crucified in order that God may live in the soul.

X. Y.

For the Guide to Christian Perfection.

EVERY-DAY EXPERIENCE.

(Continued)

MARCH 20.—To-day I enter on my ——— year. I can look back only on the three last years of my life with any degree of satisfaction. Each day of these years has found my heart in the same position, delighting in God and seeking his glory; finding all my happiness in doing his will. The years previous to this, I mourn over as years of darkness and sin, of lamentations, and bitter repentings; as spent without God, or without the enjoyment of God. How could I enjoy God, in his works, in his Word, while my soul was like the troubled deep, casting up mire and dirt? His works, so full of beauty, bespeaking such power and wisdom, I turned from them, for there came a voice to my soul, speaking condemnation. The Holy Word, where on every page I read, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart and soul, and might and mind and strength," was condemnation. The blessed Sacrament, the feast of love and sweet communings with the Savior, I

was there, a Judas! Is this religion; this the enjoyment of God; this happiness? My soul with all its energy says, No. Ruin and woe follow in the train of alienation from the blessed Lord God; and who wants his soul restored, and to feel conscious bliss, let him return unto the Lord with a heart of perfect love.

The enjoyment of God is a rich, a blessed experience; happiness indeed, and I reckon my *life* to have begun when I found God, as revealed by the power of the Holy Ghost, in and through Jesus, to my soul. Then did the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them, pass away; and all flesh became as grass, and myself an atom of creation, and God *All in all*. Then were the idols of my heart demolished, and my soul cleansed; it could easily have found a home among the pure spirits above, yea, heaven was in my soul, for the indwelling God, the Holy Ghost was there.

O sacred temple! has it since been polluted? Father, Thou knowest. I hope, I believe not. The foul breath of disease and death has often blown upon it, but the breath of the Eternal has consumed it, and O, shall I not say it, left the temple still his own? Lord, if it is so, I am wholly a debtor to thy grace. Thou knowest my weakness, — through what straits of temptation I have sometimes passed; how near my feet have come to slipping, if I have not slipped. And Thou hast seen the anguish that has almost overpowered my spirit, from the dread of sin. Yes, the thought of *Thy presence* has supported, has comforted, has cheered, when my soul was bordering on hell, on sin; and I still live, my soul is still alive to praise Thee — to declare thy great goodness, thy faithfulness to one of the children of dust, of emptiness, of very weakness itself.

O come, ye hearts of love, let us worship and adore and praise the Lord our Maker, our Redeemer, our Sanctifier; the holy, holy, holy, Three and One, in whom our salvation is complete. In the beauty of holiness, in the secret depths of the soul, let us worship and love and adore, now and for evermore. Amen.

V. W.

For the Guide to Christian Perfection.

EXPERIENCE OF G. B. B.

On the 14th day of February, 1842, the writer, after a severe and protracted struggle in prayer, found peace in believing on God.

Amid alternate hopes and fears, he struggled on until the 9th of September, 1843, when his mind became deeply exercised on the subject of holiness of heart. An extra meeting was at that time in progress in Sag Harbor, and Br. R., a faithful and holy

man was present to aid our stationed preacher in his arduous labors. The first sermon Br. R. preached was a very close and practical one on the subject of holiness, explaining how it might be obtained by consecration and prayer, and that it was our privilege to so overcome every besetting sin as to love God with all our hearts. He then invited all who would seek for the blessing of holiness or perfect love, to come forward and kneel for prayers. Being myself within the altar, I did not arise to pledge myself to seek the blessing with those who came forward. I thought it was useless for me to seek for holiness, believing that while engaged from day to day in my store, I could not live in the enjoyment of the blessing even if I should obtain it. But, when they knelt for prayers, I knelt with them. I then, led by the Spirit, began to think how I could overcome my evil propensities and live a holy life. The first besetting sin presented to my mind, as an obstacle, was anger, or a spirit of fretfulness. In the strength of the Lord I put this upon the cross, and made up my mind that, by the grace of God assisting me, I would, by watchfulness and prayer overcome it, remembering, at the same time, that precious promise, "My grace shall be sufficient for you." As soon as I had decided to overcome this sin, another and another came up before my mind, until all the temptations to which my disposition and associations peculiarly expose me, were presented before me, and as I grappled with them as they came along, with a full determination to overcome them, I was overwhelmed with deep sorrow and penitence. Tears bedewed my cheeks, and prayers and cries went up to God for help. After the praying was over, whilst still on our knees, Br. R., with a heart filled with the Holy Ghost, and with a sweet, clear, shrill voice, commenced singing those beautiful lines, "Lord, sanctify me, just now, just now." And while listening to that heavenly music, my heart melted as wax before the fire. Tears gushed from my eyes anew. I was completely overcome and sank upon the floor writhing in the greatest agony of soul, while the beloved Brother H. fervently invoked heaven's blessings upon me. At the close of the meeting I felt some relief, but went home rather cast down. The next morning when I awoke, it seemed as if the room was filled with the full rays of gospel glory, and I then loved God with all my heart, soul, strength, and mind. It appeared that heaven was about as high as the steeple of the church, and that if I prayed aloud, angels could hear me in heaven. All that day and the next day my heart was filled with this same heavenly love. In the evening I again went to church, and Brother R. explained the witness of this great blessing, whereby

I knew that I had obtained it, and felt it my duty publicly to confess it, which I did. While going home from the meeting I was greatly tempted. I thought that I now had confessed to the world that I had obtained the blessing of perfect love, and that if I did not retain it, I should bring reproach upon the cause of Christ. The next day my faith began to grow weak. I thought I should lose the blessing; that my faith was too feeble to hold it; and while meditating about losing it, I began to be a little worried about some temporal business, and there seemed at once to be two spirits contending in my heart — the spirit of the world and the spirit of God. Then I thought surely I shall lose it, and according to my faith, so it was unto me. That afternoon it flickered away like an expiring candle, and went out and left me entirely in the dark. I felt so bad that I would not go forward into the altar or take a part in the public exercises, as I had been accustomed to, but sat back in the church and waited until Brother R. came out. I told him I had lost the blessing, and asked him what I should do. He said, you got it by faith, didn't you? Yes, sir. Do you keep consecrated? Yes, sir. Well, said he, hold on by faith, and you will get it again. He then left us, and was gone about a week. When he returned the subject of holiness was again preached, but still I was in the dark. I thought, however, of this rich promise, "If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." This promise I turned over in my mind from day to day, and prayed over it; finally, I believed that this promise was true. That if I kept the commandments, I should abide in the love. I thought I would bring it to the test, and that I would adopt a *system*, such as I would in any other important business. On Sunday evening I prayed until I was blessed; I then knew that I was in the love, and keeping the promise in view. I was determined the next day to watch myself closely and see what it was that stole my peace away. I found that the same old besetting sins that I once had overcome, again sprung up and robbed me of my love. The next evening, I laid these besetments before the Lord, with a full determination to overcome them. And in answer to prayer, was blessed, and was again in the love of God. The next day I watched myself again, and found that I had so overcome the first besetments, that they did not trouble me. But other temptations again stole my peace away. The next evening I laid *them* all on the altar, and in answer to prayer, had my soul blessed, and was again in the love of God, and so continued to consecrate for several days. About the fourth day, I went into my closet, and

began to look around for some besetting sin to nail to the cross, and finding none, I felt that they were all overcome; and of a truth, I said that I loved God with all my heart. There was a perfect calm. Not a murmuring thought in my mind. The communication between my soul and God seemed to be direct. As far as the eye of faith could reach, there seemed to be one broad ocean of love, without bottom or shore. Then I praised God with all my heart. Then I basked in the full sunshine of gospel glory. Since then, when I keep the commandments, I live in love; if I wilfully break or neglect them, I lose it; and then, by using the same means, I obtain the same end. My joys often ebb and flow, but generally my peace is like a river. How sweet it is to live near the bleeding side of our blessed Redeemer. This love casts out *all* fear, except the fear of breaking the commandments, grieving the Holy Spirit and losing my love. When the balance of my affections are on anything more than God, then that love plumes its wings and takes its flight. I can live and enjoy it in the same way a man can keep perfectly clean. If he washes himself clean and puts on clean clothes he can keep himself pure only by washing and changing his clothes from day to day; so the Christian in answer to prayer from day to day, must have his heart washed in the atoning blood of Christ, be cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and be clothed with the garment of salvation. G. B. B.

Sag Harbor, L. I., March 12, 1845.

“GOD MY EXCEEDING JOY.”

ALTHOUGH affliction smites my heart,
And earthly pleasures flee,
There is one bliss that ne’er shall part,
My joy, O God, in Thee.

That joy is like the orb of day,
When clouds its track pursue;
The shades and darkness throng its way,
But sunlight struggles through.

O Thou, my everlasting light,
On whom my hopes rely;
With Thee the darkest path is bright,
And fears and sorrows die.—[*Religious Offering.*]

MRS. HANNAH M. PICKARD.

Many of our readers were acquainted with the late Mrs. HANNAH M. PICKARD, wife of the Rev. Humphrey Pickard, Principal of the Wesleyan Academy at Sackville, New Brunswick; and were edified, doubtless, by reading in this work a precious passage from her journal, published soon after her death. She was a deeply pious and devoted lady; and we are happy to learn that a memoir of her life, together with selections from her various writings, prepared by Rev. Edward Otheman, is now in the press and will be shortly published. We are kindly permitted to take from the proof-sheets the following clear and delightful relation of her experience of the blessing of full redemption. We merely add, that this great gift was bestowed upon her while she resided in Wilbraham as Preceptress of the Wesleyan Academy, and was preceded for months by an increasing devotion to God, as well as followed by still deeper piety and still wider usefulness.

SEPT. 16, 1840. — With humble confidence I would make mention of new hopes and joys — *new* indeed to me — the darkness is past, the *true light* now *shineth*. All praise be given to God! All praise be given to God! I can *now* reckon myself dead indeed unto sin, *but alive unto God*. Yes, even *I* am alive unto God, *through Jesus Christ my Lord!* How sweet to add *His* name. I thank thee, O Father, for *this* way of salvation; this is the *new* and *living* way.

“O how can words with equal warmth
The gratitude declare,
Which glows within my ravished heart!
But Thou canst read it there.”

My earliest religious impressions were received by the bedside of a dying brother, (the eldest of our family;) the kiss of his cold, damp lips, accompanied by a charge to meet him in heaven, (only an hour previous to his death,) sealed the interest of eternity upon my mind with characters ineffaceable. Years after this, when my heart embraced the hope of the gospel, I was still a child, and won to it rather by the love of Christ manifested therein, than as the refuge which it offers from the wrath of God. This characteristic of my emotions at that time, together with my lack of those raptures experienced by some, has often led me to doubt the genuineness of the admitted change, by which my name was placed upon the records of our church. I have looked upon it perhaps as *natural religion*; this has ever been my most assailable point of temptation. Like many professed followers

of Christ, my experience has been very fluctuating, often half-hearted, yet favored with seasons of enjoyment wholly undeserved by such cold affections.

For some months past I have occasionally felt the need of some influence which should *keep* me from so frequent backslidings of spirit, but I could not think that this influence must be none other than *entire consecration*. My thoughts have often been seriously arrested in view of my preparation for the present and future duties of life while so vacillating. I could but ask myself how much better prepared should I be for the employments and bliss of heaven, were I to live on so till the hour of death. As my convictions of my own frailty increased, I felt more and more the need of a principle within to keep my sliding feet, and felt it *must* be *entire consecration* alone. Yet, *now* altogether convinced of this, I was *unwilling* to be *sanctified*. It was, to my inconsistent heart, at first, so attended by an appearance of 'ultraism,' that I think a *tangible* offer of it some months since would have been *declined* by me! This the merciful influences of the Holy Spirit overcame. As the Spirit strove with me, and my repentings were so often kindled, I grieved more and more that I so grieved the Holy Spirit whereby I *might* be sealed, and began to see new beauty in this blessed doctrine. It no longer seemed to bear the odium of fanaticism, but O, it became to me the object of intense desire — to be *pure in heart* the constant breathing of my soul. I thought not of the high enjoyment, but to be accepted of "Him who seeth in secret," was my *only* wish. This became my prayer by day, my dream by night. Day after day it assumed new beauty and importance, until my common employments seemed intrusive; earthly visions faded away before it; earthly friendships were, for the time, almost forgotten, for

— "While I sought my Maker's grace,
And flesh and spirit failed before his face,
Their tempting presence from my breast I drove;—
It was no season then for earthly love."

I resolved to make an effort to obtain this blessing. I sought the throne of grace in constant prayer. On Saturday, (Sept. 11,) closing my door, and locking out care and all possibility of interruption, I resolved to make the surrender of all — my *little all*! I implored the aid of Him who is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. I drew from their lurking places my faults and selfish appetites — O what a multitude of guilty outcasts! I paused over them one by one, as my nature struggled to retain

them, and would let none escape me until the friendly, penetrating light of *Purity* enabled me to see clearly their unworthiness. I examined and re-examined, examined and re-examined, particularizing every circumstance which could influence me, weighing all. Matters of *taste* most annoyed me, and came up in a thousand forms: yet these *little* things, which *may* do so great mischief, I think I was enabled fully to overcome. I am sure now I desire none of them as I once did. The last thing which I had to contend with was this—would I be willing to return again to W. if such would seem to be duty? This, indeed, brought much contention of will, but in *this also* the will of God *shall* be done by me. I looked again, but could find nothing more which opposed it at all; *all* I could resign, yes, *all*—the present, the future, *all for Christ*. I thought I might *reckon myself* then *dead to sin*, in that it had not *dominion over me*; but I could not believe my full acceptance, and say, ‘alive unto God.’ I could not feel *direct* access to the throne of mercy. I resolved to leave there my gift before the altar, and wait the evidence of its acceptance. Several days passed in this way while I maintained my spirit of consecration; I felt this to be my only safeguard against my former cold-heartedness and *final loss*. Still I hoped; the thought that it might be before long that this high gift would be *mine*, sustained me. Yesterday (15th) I began to fear lest a promise being left me of entering into that *rest*, I should come short of it through *unbelief*. To-day the way has been much clouded; I feared it was not for *me*—that I could not believe; and thought that God could have no sympathy with such culpable timidity in relying upon His word; He would withdraw His spirit from me, and leave me to *perish*. My mind was exceedingly distressed, when suddenly the tender sentiment recorded by Isaiah came to my mind, “Can a woman forget her sucking child? Yea, they may forget, yet I will not forget Thee.” Again, with new confidence, in my room, alone, I sought to plead the promises of God which recurred to me. Again I hoped, again I sought to go up to the throne to bring down the blessing. I tried and tried to soar, until the wings of my faith wearied and drooped, and I was glad to come down, and rest *low* at the feet of Christ. I then found the word verified, it “is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy *heart*.” My mind was soon taken away for a moment by the *fullness* of the *atonement*. I had never so discovered it before. I saw it wrought out by *God himself*; then, infinite as his own character, boundless as eternity, it must prevail, it must serve for *me* too. My whole soul adored in awe. How blessed, thought I, to devote my life—a

thousand lives — to *Love like this!* My fear and all was gone, save the delightful thought of being *His alone*. “Quietness and assurance” filled my heart. I had paused in my prayer, and could but ask, what is this? It is being “alive unto God.” I can never express the sweetness, the joyous haste, with which I added the words which I had seldom observed before, — “*through Jesus Christ our Lord!*” I repeated them again and again. I had been anxious for an indubitable, startling evidence of acceptance. It came not in power or rapture, but like the message to Elijah. I heard a still small voice, and *believed* the Lord was there, and when I heard it, I wrapped myself in the mantle of *Christ’s* atonement, and listened.

In a letter to her sister, Mrs. Otheman, from which a part of the above relation is taken, she continues the account of herself, as follows:

From that time I have not doubted that my *nature* is pure in the sight of God, — *through Jesus Christ our Lord*. I think so, because I had been many days in deep darkness, but since that have known none. I think so, because since then, though more severely tempted than ever before, I have received unusually rich blessings; because I have near access at all times to the throne of grace; and because of a conviction upon my mind which forbids me for a moment to doubt that God has done this for me. To Him I owe the confession I now make to you. Since commencing this relation, something has repeatedly suggested to me that I had better not speak of it, until at least, I return home. But of this suggestion I am too suspicious to yield. I remember my past fluctuations. My heart still *keeps* the offering first made, as *unreserved* as then. For this I am thankful; it is enough. If I can have no more happiness than the consciousness that this is the case, *I am satisfied*. My only hope is in the *broad atonement*.

I was not led to the consideration of this subject, and to desires for this blessing, by any thing which has been said to me, or by reading. I cannot doubt it to be *only* the work of the Spirit on my heart. I came not to my present feelings by following the light of other Christian experience. I should think it, perhaps, a feebler testimony than most could bring; but I have a calm, full evidence, when in secret prayer, which is resistless. Indeed, what would be the corresponding testimony of all saints, *without this?* I have told you all that is in my heart. You know my constitution, and will not expect me to come to you *perfect* in every respect, nor without my *ready smile*. I am not yet able to speak of these mental exercises under

that responsible word of which I have had so exalted and fearful ideas — *sanctification*; but I should do wrong to withhold a relation of my experience thus far. And now I count not myself to have attained, either to be already *perfect*; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

I did not expect to extend my remarks so far over the sheet, but I wished to be definite to convince you of my sincerity, and, if possible, to give you the evidence which I myself have that I have not undertaken this in my own strength.

FROM THE NEW YORK EVANGELIST

THE INTERIOR LIFE: OR PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

BY MRS. HARRIET BEECHER STOWE.

In some recent remarks on this work of Professor Upham, in the Evangelist, it was spoken of as advantageous to the Christian community, because furnishing a tangible and definite point to the efforts of those who are longing for higher spiritual attainments. Its object is to treat of the higher forms of Christian experience, as they have been recognized and treated in all ages, whether by Catholic or Protestant writers — as they have been recognized, under different terms, by all denominations of Christians. The advantages to the Christian church in setting before it such distinct points of attainment, are very nearly the same in result, as the advantages of preaching immediate regeneration, in preference to indefinite exhortation to men to lead sober, righteous and godly lives. It has been found, in the course of New England preaching, that pressing men to an immediate and definite point of *conversion*, produced immediate and definite results; and so it has been found among Christians, that pressing them to any immediate and definite point of attainment, will in like manner result in marked and decided progress. For this reason it is, that among the Moravian Christians, when the experience by them denominated full assurance of faith was much insisted upon, that there were more instances of high religious faith than in almost any other denomination; while in these later times, when it is scarcely remembered that the Congregational and Presbyterian church has an article on this subject, strongly enjoining its attainment, it is an experience so rare as to excite surprise when fully manifested.

And yet there is, through the whole mass of struggling Christian mind, a longing for some definite point of rest. Doubtless, the recent discussion of

what has been denominated sinless* perfection and entire sanctification, touched chords of deep vibration in many a Christian bosom. "Would that it *could* be!" was the half-uttered language of many who saw, too logically, that in this life the sinless rest of the blessed never *would* perfectly develop itself! And seeing too clearly that such a point *was* not, in fact, and probably never would be gained, multitudes calmly resigned themselves to sigh and go backward, to water with their tears a ceaseless succession of made and broken resolutions, to be now spiritual, now worldly, and spiritual again; and thus followed ever by condemning conscience, and walking amid unsuccessful spiritual efforts, to long for death as the end alike of their struggles and their sins!

But suppose the absolute sinless rest of the blessed is not to be attained here, does it follow that there is nothing that is? Though heaven itself does not lie on this side of the river of death, is there not a land of Beulah that does? and have not multitudes who once were scarce able to keep awake on the enchanted ground, found themselves renewed as with youthful vigor, when they entered this balmy region? But after all, there is nothing on this point like experience. Let every Christian open his New Testament, and follow with us this question, — What *have* mortal men and women like us felt and attained by the power of the gospel of Christ? In opening our New Testament and reading, especially in the Epistles, we are struck with the extreme joyousness, vivacity and hope, that breathe through their whole atmosphere. It is like a green wood on a still Sabbath morning, fragrant with flowers, glancing with sunshine, ringing every where with wild, spontaneous bursts of gratulation and praise. What are the words which strike us most frequently, as we turn page after page — love, joy, peace, joy unspeakable, praise, thanksgiving, glory! The Christian church, according to the apostles, was rather a procession of royal priests, going to Mount Zion with exultation, with palms in their hands, than a long defile of weeping, self-convicted culprits, doubting, fearing, trembling and groaning under burdens. In order to give a full contrast to the apostolic style of viewing the Christian life, and that of our own time, let us imagine a little scene. Let us suppose that in one of those too long periods which now seem to be matters of course in the church, and are denominated with such resignation as *periods of declension*, that by some strange metempsychosis the soul of some good brother should in his sleep be abstracted, and its place in the body be supplied by the soul of some primitive saint, warm from the exhortations and teachings of Peter, Paul and John; and suppose the good brother, thus inwardly transformed, goes to lead in the weekly church prayer-meeting. Would not his exhortations and prayers, and the general style of his appearance, strike his neighbors as something entirely new? While they hear him, with Paul, exulting that in all things he is more than conqueror through Him that loved him; that he is led by the Spirit of God, and the Spirit itself beareth witness with his spirit that he is a child of God, an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ; that he is persuaded that neither height nor depth can separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus his Lord; that he has become dead to sin by the body of Christ, and that being dead to sin he can no longer live therein; that his heart condemns him not, and therefore he hath confidence towards God that he keeps Christ's commandments, and dwells in Christ and Christ in him, and

* See a subsequent article on Sinless Perfection.

hereby does he know that Christ abideth in him, by the spirit which he hath given him; that he is born of God and overcometh the world, and this is the *victory* that overcometh the world, even his faith.

Cannot our readers imagine, that though every word of this is quoted from Paul and John's account of ordinary Christian experience, that if spoken out with honest fervor as the *present* experience of brother X., it would produce quite a sensation in a church prayer-meeting.

"Why, what's the matter with brother X. to-night?" says one. "Quite waked up — seems to be very much revived!" says another. "Has there been any *special* interest up where he has been visiting, that's set him on this track?" says a third. "He has some enthusiastic notion in his head!" says a fourth; "what does he mean by being 'dead to sin,' and 'having overcome the world?' Very dangerous notions. I'm afraid he's getting unsound — or may be it's all nervous excitement."

But if the meeting is astonished at brother X., brother X. is no less astonished at the meeting. He listens to a long prayer, the whole drift of which seems to be to lament the want of any particular interest in religion, and to confess a very urgent and decided interest in the things of this world, and he really pities the brother for having unaccountably come to such an alarming state; but he soon finds, by appearances, that the good brother is in no way alarmed or distressed, and discovers also, by the drift of the remarks that follow, that this state, though acknowledged truly lamentable, is to be the understood order of things in the church, till there comes another revival. Much to his astonishment, he finds himself thus addressed — "Why, brother X., what has come over you? What is this state of feeling you express? you must be in a most uncommon state of mind! What do you mean by being in Christ and Christ in you, being dead to sin, and overcoming the world?" — to which with equal surprise he replies — "Why, brethren, what do *you* mean, by *not* being in this state? Is not Christ also in you? Are you not dead to sin and alive to God? Are you not led by the Spirit of God? What know ye not that the Lord Jesus is *in* you, except ye be reprobates?"

"Why," insists another, "this is strange language; it is something that I cannot quite *get at* — it seems to have some Scripture warrant, too; but pray tell us how you came to feel so!"

"Why, here is the New Testament — the holy apostles, St. Peter, Paul and John; pray, *how else*, according to them, should one feel?" replies X.

"Well," says another, "I know there are many such things in the Bible, to be sure, but it isn't very common for people to attain to them. I'm sure it's high above me. I'm in a very cold state, for my part, I know. I feel condemned for it, every day."

"Cold!" says X.; "you a son of God, you an heir of God, and *cold*! And did you not to-night say in prayer, that the world attracted you so strongly that you could scarcely fix your thoughts on God? How is it that the world can have such power over you, if Christ is in you and you in him?"

"But that is what I don't feel," replies the other. "This is a very unusual mode of presenting the subject. I am not conscious of any such union to Christ as that you express."

‘I sometimes think myself inclined
To love Him, if I could;
But oftener feel another mind,
Averse to all that’s good.’ ”

“Ah, poor brother!” says X., in astonishment, “by what lamentable chance art thou thus fallen? Such a state, doubtless, fills thee with anxiety and agony.”

“Well, I can’t say as to that,” replies the other. “I think it does cause me some anxiety, at times; but I can’t say I expect much in this life. I hope the Lord will cut short the conflict in death.”

“For my part,” says another, “these heights and depths are not for me. Ministers, and men who have leisure to study and examine the Bible, may have them; but for me, I am so pressed down with care and business that *must* be attended to, that it’s impossible for me to get into this state. I hope I have a *general purpose* to serve the Lord, but my business engagements won’t allow of much spiritual attainments.”

“But,” says X., “what does being *ferrent* in spirit mean, while one is diligent in business? Does not fervent mean *burning, ardent* with love to Christ?”

“Well, I suppose we ought to,” says the other; “but you know nobody ever does as they ought to. I never saw the Christian that dared to say as much as you did to-night! that their conscience did not condemn them — that they were dead to sin, and had overcome the world. That looks to me like perfectionism.”

“But, my dear brother, does not Paul say, in the name of all Christians, — How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? and, Likewise reckon ye yourselves dead to sin, but alive unto God. Now he did mean something by this — what do you think it was? Did it not mean that his heart was so drawn and absorbed by Christ, that all temptation to worldliness had lost its hold on him, and affected him no more than if he was dead; whereas he was alive to God — warm, active, ardent in spiritual things? In the same way he says, I am crucified with Christ, yet I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. Don’t you feel the full meaning of this?”

“Don’t think I ever did. There was a time, for about a month, last year, in the revival, that I felt very much engaged, and had great enjoyment; and I think the world seemed to lose its hold of me a good deal; but somehow that feeling all went down, and I lost it. You know how it is — we never shall keep steady till we get to heaven.”

“But pray, brethren, what *does* the apostle mean, when he says, Be ye *steadfast*, immovable, *always* abounding in the work of the Lord?” says X.

“Well, yes, that is our duty, to be sure; but somehow we don’t come up to it — nobody does.”

We need not pursue the image farther. Our readers can carry it out for themselves. But will not every one see that the apostolic and primitive Christian experience is so high above what is at present expected or attempted by the mass of the church, that a sudden translation into it would be like a new conversion? Would not the individual who found himself raised to it from the level of what is commonly called a *credible* Christian profession, feel himself in a new world, and speak of himself as having in fact come out of darkness into marvellous light, and from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the children of God?

Is it not a fact, that there are many who are not even seriously and honestly trying to come up to this point, and who feel no more sense of present obligation to reach it, than they do to go to the moon? Is not the current objection to even attempting to come into such a state of life and feeling, found in the all-prevalent phrase — “Nobody does it. If *that* is being a Christian, who is one?” Now, while heights like these are lying unattempted before the church, how idle seems the discussion of the abstract probability of entire and sinless perfection in this life. How painful are many of the things that have occurred in this discussion, to the serious, earnest Christian! The settling of it resolves itself at last into all the mazes of metaphysical subtlety; and it agitates and distracts the mind which ought to be bent to serious and earnest effort. But here in the Bible we have before us the recorded experience of what, by the grace of Christ, men and women like ourselves have undoubtedly and *in fact* attained. The idea has seemed to pervade many minds, that a full belief of the absolute attainability of entire perfection was necessary, as a definite point, before Christians could be roused to immediate and decided efforts. But waiving and setting aside this question altogether, let us ask, Is there not a state of feeling in the New Testament, avowed by the apostles, and understood by them as of course existing in those to whom they wrote, that presents a point of attainment high enough, and definite enough, and one that can be striven after understandingly, because it has in fact *been* attained? Let us set forth some of these points distinctly:

1st. A state in which the mind is so bent and absorbed by the love of Christ, that all inducements to worldliness lose their power, and the mind becomes as indifferent to them as a dead body to physical allurements. The whole of the 6th of Romans represents this as the state, in fact, of those who are under grace. How shall we that are dead to sin *live* any longer therein, &c. Knowing this, that our old man *is crucified* with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him. Likewise reckon ye yourselves also to be *dead* indeed unto sin, but alive unto God. The whole chapter is an expansion of the same idea.

2d. A state in which the Christian acts no more principally from constitutional impulse, but so steadily and constantly from the impulse of Christ, that he can say, I am crucified with Christ, yet I live; yet *not* I, but *Christ* liveth in me.

3d. This was a favorite mode of expression with Paul. He seems to consider himself as so borne along beyond himself by the power of Christ, that his course of action was more referable to Christ than to himself. I labored more abundantly than they all, yet *not* I, but the grace of Christ that was in me.

4th. A state in which we can say, The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the *children* of God. And if children, then heirs — heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

5th. A state of mind, finally, in which the high devotional language of the Bible becomes the spontaneous and habitual language of the soul, more in accordance with its constant and habitual current of feeling than any other.

The common state of mind at present in professors of religion, seems in most cases to be thus described. A strong current of inward feeling is constantly

inclining them to the world, and they come into a spiritual state of feeling only by hard efforts; and if these are a moment relaxed, they are instantly borne down stream. The state represented in the New Testament is one where the whole force of the current is turned the other way. The mind is going as with an irresistible impulse *heavenward*, and if any accidental causes for a season interrupt its course, like the interrupted river it soon surmounts the obstacle, and urges its way the more vehemently. As the bended bow springs back when loosed from the string, so the soul in this state, though it may casually be diverted from its course, still springs back with a strong elastic impulse, towards God and heaven! Seasons of high spirituality, in most Christian lives, are *exceptions*, long treasured and remembered; but according to the New Testament, a season of worldliness, should it occur, would form the *exception*, ever remembered and deplored. No mention is made of such a state, as in any way incidental to the Christian course.

Do any doubt whether such a state of feeling as has been indicated in this article, is *at present* attainable? We will suggest a course, by which they can satisfactorily test the point. Let them take just the same course that they would recommend to a friend who doubted whether there was such a thing as real conversion. To such an one they would say — "You can try the experiment for yourself. If you are converted yourself, you will know, of course." So if an individual wishes to know whether the position where Paul and John stood, and where those stood to whom they wrote, is still open for attainment, they can try it for themselves. Let them write out for themselves those passages that describe this state. Let them, in the same serious and earnest manner in which they first resolved to put by all worldly considerations, and attend to the salvation of their souls, resolve now to make a present and definite object of this attempt. Let them resolve to be a Christian after the full New Testament model, though not another Christian in the world should do it; and let them daily pray to Him who "came to baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire," that he would do for them *all* that he ever did for mortal. Let them put the power of Christ to a full test; let them resolve that they will know *how much* he is able and willing to do for them. There are now scattered, through the Christian church, multitudes who have tried this course with glorious results! They have heard the sound, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by" — they have risen to effort — the gracious hand has touched their eyes, and they have been opened to behold wondrous things. It will be an interesting work, to show, in some future article, that this high primitive and apostolic experience has been known by individuals in the church ever since. Must it not become the common experience of all Christians, before Christ can subdue the world?

IS CHRISTIAN PERFECTION A SINLESS PERFECTION?

The following extract from Wesley on Christian Perfection, we copy in reference to some expressions in Mrs. Stowe's article on "The Interior Life."

Q. 8. But do "we" not "in many things offend all," yea, the best of us, even against this law? (of faith.)

A. In one sense we do not, while all our tempers, and thoughts, and words, and works spring from love. But in another we do, and shall do, more or less, as long as we remain in the body. For neither love nor the "unction of the Holy One" makes us infallible. Therefore through unavoidable defect of understanding we cannot but mistake in many things. And these mistakes will frequently occasion something wrong, both in our temper, and words, and actions. From mistaking his character, we may love a person less than he really deserves. And by the same mistake we are unavoidably led to speak or act with regard to that person in such a manner as is contrary to this law, in some or other of the preceding instances.

Q. 9. Do we not then need Christ, even on this account?

A. The holiest of men still need Christ as their prophet, as "the light of the world." For he does not give them light but from moment to moment; the instant he withdraws all is darkness. They still need Christ as their king. For God does not give them a stock of holiness; but unless they receive a supply every moment, nothing but unholiness would remain. They still need Christ as their priest, to make atonement for their holy things. Even perfect holiness is acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ.

Q. 10. May not then the very best of men adopt the dying martyr's confession, "I am in myself *nothing but sin, darkness, hell*; but thou art my light, my holiness, my heaven?"

A. Not exactly. But the best of men may say, "Thou art my light, my holiness, my heaven. Through my union with thee I am full of light, of holiness, and happiness. And *if I were left to myself I should be nothing but sin, darkness, hell.*"

But to proceed. The best of men need Christ as their priest, their atonement, their advocate with the Father; not only as the continuance of their every blessing depends on his death and intercession, but on account of their coming short of the law of love. For every man living does so. You who *feel all love*, compare yourselves with the preceding description; weigh yourselves in this balance, and see if you are not wanting in many particulars.

Q. 11. But if all this be consistent with Christian perfection, that perfection is not freedom from all sin, seeing "sin is the transgression of the law." And the perfect in love transgress the very law they are under. Besides, they need the atonement of Christ. And he is the atonement for nothing but sin. Is then the term *sinless perfection* proper?

A. I do not approve of the expression. But observe in what sense the person in question needs the atonement of Christ. They do not need him to reconcile them to God *afresh*, for they *are* reconciled. They do not need him to *restore* the favor of God, but to *continue* it. He does not procure pardon for them *anew*, but "ever liveth to make intercession for them." And "by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." — Heb. x. 14.

For want of duly considering this, some deny that they need the atonement of Christ. Indeed, exceeding few; I do not remember to have found five of them in England. Of the two, I would far sooner give up Christian perfection. But we need not give up either one or the other. The perfection I hold, *love* "rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in every thing giving thanks," is well consistent with it. If any hold a perfection which is not, they must look to it.

For the Guide to Christian Perfection.

RELIGIOUS CORRESPONDENCE.

Cautious in professing — Declension, occasion undiscovered — Trifling witnessed with complacency — "Wherefore have I doubted" — Religious zeal flagging and little progress — Contrition — Hope of regaining the blessing.

PRECIOUS SISTER IN THE LORD,— Your very excellent letter of the 28th March (post marked 10th April,) was handed to me last week on my return from our national capital. I need not say, that I have read it with pleasure, with profit, and with gratitude. Your introductory apology for so long neglect of me is grateful to my feelings, for I had feared that sister — had well nigh forgotten me, and I felt conscious that I did not deserve to occupy a moment of that precious time which you devote, with so much better results, in other directions. I think it is more than two years since I last wrote you; soon after which, I think, my love diminished, my zeal cooled. Within about six months after, I was enabled to offer myself an unreserved sacrifice, and receive Christ as my wisdom, righteousness, *sanctification* and redemption. I began to be cautious in professing, and ere long ceased to affirm my confidence in the present, personal efficacy of the all-cleansing blood of Jesus. I could not have told at the time, nor have I been able yet to discover the occasion of my declension.

I desire to be free and unreserved in my communications with my dear brother and sister —, whom I have valued as my very best friends in the flesh. I wish it were in my power so to express myself as to give you a perfect understanding of my experience; perhaps I cannot so well accomplish this as by quoting from my private journal.

MAY 19, 1842.— A few moments allotted to write — had I time, I should desire to enter more at large into my Christian experience. I love my dear Savior, but I feel an ardent desire to be *lost* and *swallowed up* in his love — to be filled with his Spirit. The trifling spirit indulged by all, (except mother,) is not profitable or gratifying to me, though I endeavor to witness it with complacency generally, for the sake of the rest, as to be grave, and solemn, and reserved, would dissatisfy and disgust my wife and brother, &c., and I have thought, diminish their confidence in me, and alienate their minds toward religion.* Yet I am not without apprehension that I may err in my opinion and be wrong in my

* Was not this one occasion of declension?

practice in this matter. "Ye are the salt of the earth"—"Ye are the light of the world," are the precepts of our blessed Jesus. O, am I even as salt in my own family? Am I a light in my own house? Now a light on a candlestick giveth light to all in the room. Am I thus a conspicuous luminary, or is my light hid under a bushel? Look to it, O William!

JUNE 13, 1842.—I have nothing very satisfactory to record concerning my religious experience. My determination to be wholly the Lord's was never more decided than now.

"But though my will
Seem fixt, yet wide my passions rove;
Yet hindrances strew all the way;
I aim at thee, yet from thee stray."

My enjoyments are not as they have been sometimes; but I love my Lord and endeavor to serve him, and I don't know that my heart condemns me. I have peace with God, and feel that Jesus is precious to me. I am sensible that I suffer from the want of religious communion with Christians—the only opportunity I have being that of class meeting.

JUNE 27, 1842.—Last Monday evening, we had a very excellent class meeting! Br. L.— and two strangers present. The Lord, too, revealed himself in our midst. All glory to his precious name! I feel an earnest desire for a greater nearness to God—"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ"—O, I pant for that heavenly mind. "If any man have not the *Spirit* of Christ, he is none of his"—O, my soul pants after that heavenly Spirit. Lord, increase my faith! I am desirous and determined to know nothing but Jesus and him crucified.

JULY 10, 1842.—I take my pen to write, without knowing how to describe my religious experience. Of religious joy I have a very moderate share; my faith is weak, my trials considerable. This moment this passage of Scripture occurs: "Through much tribulation ye shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven." My heart responds gladly, Amen, if it be the will of my adorable Master. I believe that for some time past I have been the object of Satan's desire. He would excite distrust in God, doubt of my own experience, and I fear his efforts have not been without success to some extent. O wherefore have I doubted? God promised me, 2d January last, that if I would then dedicate my all to him, He would be the strength of my heart and my portion for ever. He mercifully granted me power to believe in him, and applied the gracious promise, "Then will I sprinkle you with clean water," &c., and "I will save you from all your uncleanness." And I

was cleansed, and the Lord *did* save me, all glory to his precious name! But O, what has deprived me of those heavenly joys, those delicious seasons?

“What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still;
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill.”

“Hardly yet do I know, how I let my Lord go,
So insensibly starting aside;
When the tempter came in, with his own subtle sin,
And infected my spirit with pride.”

Though I am constrained to confess that I have lost the evidence of purity, and feel again the risings of sinful nature, I thank the Lord that I feel to say,

“I cannot rest till *pure* within,
Till I am *wholly* lost in thee.”

Still, I am sensible that this language, nor yet the desire which prompts it, can restore the fallen. O, Savior! thy blood alone can wash me clean. Wilt thou regard the abject me? Mercy is thy darling attribute. *Mercy* I ask. *Mercy, mercy*, gracious Lord! I deserve wrath, but O, mercy's free. If thou wilt restore me, O Lord, I will strive more, if possible, than ever, in thy strength to let my light shine.

MARCH 31, 1844. — My religious zeal is flagging; I have been wonderfully oppressed during this term with care, and very much disheartened on account of religious and social privations, &c. My great purpose is, I am conscious, to serve God and glorify his adorable name. At times, I have experienced ardent desires for more religion, but I am making very little or no progress, I fear, in the heavenly journey. O Lord! let it please thee to beget in me again those fervent, burning aspirations after the mind of my dear Savior—that hungering and thirsting after righteousness which has the promise of being satisfied from thy fulness!

I have thus, dear brother and sister, *opened my heart* to you, as it regards some periods of my experience. You will reproach me with my unbelief and my unfaithfulness, and I deserve it all; and I feel that my dear Savior reproaches me, and this I cannot bear. I love my Jesus, and it breaks my heart to think how unkind, ungrateful, treacherous I have been. I desire, more than I can tell, to know Him in the power of his full salvation. Yet I lack courage—such mountains seem in the way: my insulated situation, as it respects Christian communion, my great and inces-

sant cares and vexations, &c. &c. Still, I am quite sure that I can do all through Christ. I feel to-day much of the drawings of the Holy Spirit, and trust I shall be able again to present my body a *living sacrifice* unto him. Pray for me; and if I will not rob more deserving ones, let me share in your epistolary sympathies and counsels.

DR. BEECHER ON SANCTIFICATION.

The following notice is copied from the *Morning Chronicle*. The announcement that Dr. Beecher has taken such a position, and that the meetings he held were so interesting, will be a source of gratitude and joy with many of our readers.

Two very interesting meetings were held yesterday, at the Mt. Vernon church, to hear from the venerable Dr. Beecher an account of the religious experience which has been enjoyed within the past year, by some members of Lane Seminary, and others in the West, and to unite in conference and prayer for the same blessings elsewhere. His statements were extremely interesting and instructive. He represented that a good many persons had lately found by happy experience, the blessing of sanctification by simple faith in Christ. Christians who feel the need of holiness, seek it too much in a legal way, and not by faith. He said the requisities to the obtaining of the blessing, were:

1. A firm belief that it is practicable.
2. A strong conviction that it is a duty to possess it, and a sin to be without it.
3. A fixed determination to seek it, and to seek it now.
4. A willingness to sacrifice every thing, no matter what, that obstructs its attainment.
5. A diligent use of all the means of grace, especially the word of God and prayer.

And then there should be simple dependence on Christ for it. All seeking which is not by faith in Christ is legal, and must be ineffectual. He said that he had himself begun to enjoy it, though he had sought it so late in life. He gave a variety of elaborate instructions and careful distinctions, to prevent misconception and preclude error and fanaticism. He read some letters descriptive of the experience of individuals, corresponding very much with that of Edwards, Brainerd, and James Brainerd Taylor. His whole soul was in his theme, and a large assembly of Christians, including many ministers, listened with the deepest interest.

FROM THE HOME MISSIONARY MAGAZINE.

"THERE WAS SILENCE IN HEAVEN."

Can angel spirits need repose,
In the full sunlight of the sky?
And can the veil of slumber close
A cherub's bright and blazing eye?

Have seraphims a weary brow,
A fainting heart, and aching breast?
No, far too high their pulses flow,
To languish with inglorious rest.

How could they sleep amid the bliss,
The banquet of delight above?
Or bear for one short hour to miss
The vision of the Lord they love?

O! not the death-like calm of sleep
Could hush the everlasting song;
No fairy dream or slumber deep,
Entrance the rapt and holy throng.

Yet not the lightest tone was heard
From angel voice or angel hand,
And not one plumed pinion stirred
Among the bowed and blissful band.

For there was silence in the sky,
A joy no angel tongue could tell,
As from its mystic point on high
The peace of God in stillness fell.

O, what is silence here below?
The quiet of concealed despair,
The pause of pain, the dream of wo,—
It is the rest of rapture there.

And, to the way-worn pilgrim here,
More kindred seems that perfect peace
Than the full chants of joy to hear
Roll on, and never, never cease.

From earthly agonies set free,
Fired with the path too slowly trod,
May such a silence welcome me
Into the palace of my God!